



VAISAKHI: Khalsa Sajna Divas on 13 April 2021

Vaisakhi is one of the most important dates in the Sikh calendar. It marks the day in 1699 when Guru Gobind Singh Ji the 10th Sikh Guru established the **Khalsa Panth** at Sri Anandpur Sahib. It is also known as Khalsa Sajna Divas and in 2021 Vaisakhi will be taking place on Tuesday 13 April.

In 1699 the 10th Sikh Guru asked for a Sikh to come forward who was prepared to give his or her life for their faith. Five Sikhs one at a time came forward in a gathering of thousands "to give their heads". These five initiated individuals came to be known as the **Panj Pyare, the five beloved ones**. These five were Bhai Daya Singh, Bhai Dharam Singh, Bhai Himmat Singh, Bhai Mokham Singh and Bhai Sahib Singh.

DAYA, DHARAM, HIMMAT, MOKHAM, SAHIB

(Compassion) (Righteousness) (Courage) (Steadfast) (Mastery)



These five names are the foundations of faith for Sikhs. They are presented in order of spiritual progress and were created as part of the Divine Order of the Khalsa. Whilst initiating these five Sikhs, five prayers were recited over water and glucose crystals, stirred by a Khanda (double-edged sword) in an iron vessel.

Sikh men were then given the name "**Singh**" meaning "lion" and Sikh women received the last name "**Kaur**" meaning "princess". The Khalsa Panth or the Order of the Pure Ones was formed to take a stand against oppression and uphold righteousness.

To become a member of the Khalsa Panth a person must be initiated by going through the **Amrit Sanchar** ceremony that has remained unchanged since the first ceremony that took place in 1699 under the guidance of Guru Gobind Singh Ji. Amrit Sanchar or Khanda-di-Pahul is the term used to refer to the ceremony where initiated Sikhs become **Amritdhari**, literally meaning one who has Taken on Amrit.

The term Khalsa Panth is the collective name given to Amritdhari Sikhs and applies to men and women equally. Everyone who takes Amrit makes a promise to lead a pure and pious life to unite with God. It is about inward cleansing of the conscience and seeking unity with God.

Those taking Amrit must have the five or **Panj Kakaars** when they present themselves before Guru Granth Sahib Ji (the Sikh Holy scriptures) for initiation of Amrit. The Panj Kakaar are:

1. **Kesh - unshorn hair**
2. **Kirpan – sword**
3. **Kachhehra - knee length shorts**
4. **Kanga - wooden comb tucked in the tied-up hair**
5. **Kara - iron bracelet**



Those preparing to take Amrit are apprised of the conditions for acceptance before the ceremony is started. They are apprised about the pure and virtuous life they must lead. When the candidates agree to live by the discipline and Sikh Code of Conduct, the Panj Pyare start preparing the Amrit.

A Sarb Loh or iron cauldron (Bata or bowl) that signifies the strength of heart and mind is filled with water. Some Patashas (sugar crystals) are poured into the water. The Panj Pyare then sit in Vir Asan (seated on the ground with left knee down and the right knee up) around the cauldron.

The mixture of Amrit is stirred with a Khanda (the two-edged sword) that signifies a spirit of valour and bravery while the Panj Pyare recite the five Banis (Japji Sahib, Jaap Sahib, Sawayae, Chaupai Sahib and Anand Sahib) with full concentration on the Amrit preparation in the cauldron. The five Banis signify strong faith and cohesion in the devotees. The solution thus prepared is called Amrit (nectar of immortality).

Amrit Chhakhna refers to the drinking of the Amrit or Nectar. Five handfuls of Amrit are given for drinking, five handfuls are sprinkled over the hair and another five are sprinkled into the eyes of each of the devotees who offer to be initiated.

Amrit Chhakhna is the start of one's journey on a path to attain a pure and pious life which is essential to attain God according to Guru Granth Sahib Ji. Every Sikh should aspire to live their life by the values and virtues of Gurmat and at an appropriate time voluntarily submit himself or herself to Amrit.



Sikhs normally celebrate Vaisakhi by visiting their local Gurdwara. During Vaisakhi, large processions called **Nagar Kirtans** led by the Panj Pyare with swords unsheathed are held all over the world. "Nagar" means town and "Kirtan" means the singing of hymns from Guru Granth Sahib Ji. This is the second year when Nagar Kirtans in the UK will not be taking place due to the coronavirus pandemic.

Over the years, Vaisakhi day has become a significant date on which Sikh's commemorate other historical events. On Vaisakhi day in 1801 Maharaja Ranjit Singh was proclaimed the leader of the Sikh Empire that was recognised by all the world powers and existed for 50 years from 1799. In 1919 Vaisakhi day was marked by the **Jallianwala Bagh massacre** for which an apology continues to be demanded from the UK Government by Sikhs across the globe. In more recent times on Vaisakhi day in 1978 thirteen Sikhs were massacred in Amritsar by Indian police that was a major turning point in the most recent agitation for greater rights.